DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 359 766 FL 020 831

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TITLE Some Aspects of the Pragmatic Organization of Academic Discourse.
PUB DATE Apr 92
NOTE 13p.; In: Nordic Research on Text and Discourse: NORDTEXT Symposium (Espoo, Finland, May 10-13, 1990); see FL 020 811.
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Cultural Influences; *Finnish; Foreign Countries; *French; Higher Education; Masters Theses; Second Language Instruction; Text Structure; Translation; Uncommonly Taught Languages
IDENTIFIERS *Academic Discourse

ABSTRACT

This paper discusses aspects of signaling structure by means of textual organizers in Finnish and French academic discourse. The assumption that there exist culture-bound conventions for marking textual organization by either explicit or implicit linguistic means was explored. Observations are offered of French and Finnish articles and summaries of Finnish master's degree theses dealing with language and translation. Discussion focuses on (1) markers of linear integration in discourse, and (2) the paragraph as a textual organizer. (JB)

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Some aspects of the pragmatic organization of academic discourse

EIJA SUOMELA-SALMI

Abstract

This paper deals with the pragmatic organization of academic discourse in French and Finnish. The underlying hypothesis is that in Finnish academic discourse textual structure is less explicitly marked than in French academic discourse. The following textual organizers with a pragmatic value will be discussed: 1) the 'M.I.L.' - 'marqueurs d'intégration linéaire', i.e. markers of linear integration in discourse, 2) the paragraph as a textual organizer even if it is frequently treated as a mere typographic device . The aim of the paper is not to present exact quantitative data but to discuss the functions of these textual organizers in the light of Finnish and French examples.

1. Introduction

This paper discusses some aspects of signalling structure by means of textual organizers in Finnish and French academic discourse. Expository/argumentative texts composed in French as L2 by Finnish students seem to contain too few textual organizers, if any, and professional French translators tend to add markers signalling the textual organization of the text in their translations of Finnish texts (cf. Suomela-Salmi 1987). This led me to suppose that there exist culture-bound differences/conventions for marking textual organization by explicit or implicit linguistic means. To find out if this assumption was justified, I turned to Finnish and French academic discourse, in this case in the field of linguistics. My observations are based on a corpus consisting of 15 French and 15 Finnish articles and 15 French summaries of Finnish master's degree theses dealing with language and translation. (Translations of the Finnish examples are given in the Appendix.)

2. Textual organizers

Schneuwly et al. (1989: 40) consider textual organizers as traces of linguistic operations which result from textual planning; not only is the notion of connectedness taken into account,as the term connector suggests, but also the segmentation of the text at various levels. Consequently, in addition to connectors, various temporal and argumentative expressions are included under the notion of textual organizers. The textual organizers are particularly sensitive to the content of the text and the situational factors of text production. Schneuwly et al. (1989: 43) further define textual organizers as having the following characteristics:

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1) they are not an integral part of propositional structures, 2) they join propositional structures together or organize them in a linear sequence, 3) they do not follow the rules of grammatical congruence as do some cohesive units.

2.1. *The M.I.L. i. e. linguistic elements marking the linear sequentiality of discourse*

As Turco and Coltier (1988: 58) point out, language does not have specific morphemes to mark linear sequentiality, but to mark this type of textual organization it has to borrow from other subsystems such as:

1) **énumeration** (' *premièrement*',' *deuxièmement*'...)

> (1)....cette discipline ne connaît pas de cadre théorique stable. Et cela, pour *deux* raisons:
> *1*) la multitude des genres discursifs étudiés
> *2*) la diversité des procédures d'analyse

In this example the enumeration is in fact marked twice; first, by typographic means and secondly, by the use of numerals instead of *premièrement, deuxièmement*. The marking of the enumeration is all the stronger since the preceding proposition already contains the numeral *deux*. This kind of marking can also be realized by means of alphabetical listing or by using alineas. The difference between *premièrement.. deuxièmement* and the other devices used is that only *premièrement.... deuxièmement...* seems to create an explicit hierarchic order among the constituents.

The Finnish texts of my corpus frequently rely solely on single marking, i.e. typographic means and the linearity of the text, especially within a short text segment.

> (2) Erityistä kiinnostusta adaptaatio-teoriassa herättävät kuitenkin sen implikaatiot. Mainitsen näistä vain *kaksi*: variabiliteetti ja kontekstuaalinen vaikutus.

Within longer segments, for example in cases where the enumerated facts or arguments appear in separate paragraphs, the first one can remain unmarked whereas the additional items of the list are explicitly marked in order to ensure the sequential interpretation, which is more difficult because of the distance between the enumerated facts.

> (3) Verschurenin mukaan on olemassa makro-ja mikroadaptaatiota. Esimerkiksi kielen mukautuminen on adaptaation kannalta makroilmiö....Esimerkkinä mikro-tason mukautumisesta *taas* voidaan mainita puhutteluterminologia.....

Toinen tärkeä kohta on mukautumisen kaksisuuntaisuus.

2) **Spatial organization** (*'d'un côté ....de l'autre côté'*, *'d'une part... d'autre part'*...)

> (4) De fait l'énonciation touche à un point qui, pour le linguiste, demeure critique, celui des relations en son sein entre syntaxe *d'une part*, semantique et interprétation *de l'autre*.

According to Turco and Coltier (1988:63), the function of *'d'une part... d'autre part'* is to mark the frontiers of those constituents which are to be integrated in the same package - 'la fonction d'empaquetage', as it is called. The use of the 'M.I.L.' (*marqueurs d'intégration linéaire*, 'markers of linear integration in discourse') does not, however, mean that the semantic units - 'paquets' - delimited in this way would not be recognizable to the reader without this explicit marking. In most cases *'d'une part... d'autre part'* could be omitted without radically affecting the intelligibility of the discourse. This claim can be substantiated by the two versions of the following example:

> (5) Si l'on admet avec Tom que l'explication d'un ordre de phénomènes peut prendre *deux* formes, *d'une part* l'approche réductionniste, *d'autre part* l'approche structurale,.....
>
> (5') Si l'on admet avec Tom que l'explication d'un ordre de phénomènes peut prendre deux formes,l'approche réductionniste *et* l'approche structurale..

However, the junction by means of the additive connector *'et'* is weaker, since it does not explicitly express the dichotomic relation involved in (5).

The units marked by *'d'une part...'d'autre part'*, *'d'un côté...de l'autre côté'* and their Finnish equivalent 'toisaalta...toisaalta' can be of considerable length. These textual organizers frequently act intersententially but they can also reach across the paragraph boundary. In cases where these organizers act between units longer than a sentence, the dichotomic relation discussed above is weakened. Instead an adversative-additive relation is created.

> (6) Se onko kombinointi puhtaasti kompositionaalinen vai voiko se jotenkin muuttaa osista saatavaa tulosta, on tällä hetkellä yksi CG tutkimuksen ongelmallisista kysymyksistä....
>
> *Toisaalta* CG on ainoa kielioppimalleista, joilla on itsessään, puhtasti teoreettisena konstruktiona, yhteys semantiikkaan. Lisäksi sen mukainen lauseanalyysi.....

Example (6) illustrates the reliance of the Finnish discourse on linear organization as far as the first argument in a unit is concerned. The second has to be explicitly

marked, especially in cases where the first argument is developed at some length. The distance between the points makes marking necessary so that the reader can still interpret them as belonging to the same sequence.

3) **Temporal organization** (*'d'abord'*, *'puis'*, *'ensuite'*...)

> (7) Cette conception du discours soulève un certain nombre d'objections. *Tout d'abord*, l'existence de fonctions canoniques, hierarchisables,fournit une typologie restrictive des messages négligeant leurs circonstances de production... *Une autre* critique adressée à R.Jakobson concerne le statut des fonctions du langage et des pôles de la communication...*Enfin*, l'ethnographie de la communication a montré que ces fonctions ne sont pas universelles, mais qu'elles varient selon la situation de communication.

The function of the series *'d'abord'*, *'puis'*,*'ensuite'*....*'enfin'* seems to be twofold. First, they seem to indicate the preferred order of decoding the discourse. This is the function of 'balisage', i.e. marking the route for the receptor. Secondly, the presence of this series could be interpreted as a trace of the textualisation process performed by the writer as suggested by Adam and Revaz (1989: 72), a view very much in line with the psycholinguistic model of text production proposed by Schneuwly and Bronckart (1986: 279-281). Example (7) also illustrates the fact that not all elements in the series marked by this 'temporal chain' have to be explicitly marked. In this case the initial and final elements are explicitly marked by *'tout d'abord* and *'enfin'* respectively, whereas the medial component is less clearly signalled to the reader by *'une autre'*, a kind of additive device. According to Adam et Revaz (1989:71), however, in French it is customary to mark at least the final element in a series, and this is most often realized by *'enfin'* or *'et enfin'*. This observation is valid for Finnish discourse as well. Even if the beginning and the middle of a series of arguments or reasons are not explicitly marked, the final element is frequently marked by *'lopuksi'*, *'viimeksi'*, *'vihdoin'* (*'finally'*, *'lastly'*...).

The temporal organizing of dicourse can also be carried out in an inverted order, as shown by the following example:

> (8) *Ennen kuin* esittelen lähemmin DRT:ä..., tarkastelen NP:itten uudenlaista tulkintaa.... (*Before* presenting the DRT in more detail, I shall discuss a new kind of interpretation of NP's.)
>
> (8') Tarkastelen (ensin) NP:itten uudenlaista tulkintaa *ennen kuin* esittelen.... (I shall (first) discuss a new interpretation *before* presenting the DRT in more detail...)

From the point of view of temporality in this case the inverted order is thematically motivated. The DRT is the discourse topic of this text; so far no mention of a new

interpretation of NP's has occurred. To ensure topic continuity, i.e. to guarantee that a coherent interpretation is arrived at without an excessive processing load, the inverted temporal ordering of (8) is preferred to that of (8').

In a text using a different textual strategy, narration for example, or in the narrative passages of an expository or argumentative text, the 'M.I.L.' borrowed from temporal structuring can include more or less exact indications of time. These mark the textual progression by organizing the textual blocks thus created in a chronological order.

> (9) Dans le rapide tour d'horizon qui suit,on rappellera *tout d'abord* en quels termes les problèmes de cohérence et de continuité textuelles ont été abordés par les grammariens du texte *jusqu'à vers les années 1975*.....On montera *ensuite* comment, *à partir de la fin des années 1970*, un certain nombre d'exemples recalcitrants ont amené les linguistes travaillant sur le texte à envisager autrement les problèmes de cohérance,*on terminera* en essayant de dégager ce que peut être, dans ce contexte, l'apport spécifique des linguistes sur la textualité.....

In this example again a double marking is used 1) by means of the string '*tout d'abord, ensuite, on terminera*' and 2) by pure chronological indications. This example is an extract from an introduction to an article and clearly displays the two functions of the textual organizers: to function as guiding signals to the reader, thus acting cataphorically, but also as signs of the textualisation process performed by the writer.

> (10) Näkemyksen historiallisen tapahtumisen katkonaisuudesta esitti *Michel Foucault* kirjassaan 'Les mots et les choses' (1966)... *Jaques Derrida* puolestaan' radikalisoi' Foucaultin kannan:....*Jean-François Lyotard* on lainannut avainkäsitteensä eli 'kielipelin' Wittgensteinin myöhäisfilosofiasta,ja hän puolestaan 'radikalisoi' Wittgensteinin kannan.....

Example (10) is more implicit and hence more problematic, since the chronological development is realized through the proper names. Only for the first one (Foucault) is an exact temporal indication given (1966); in order to understand the temporal progression expressed by the subsequent proper names some encyclopaedic knowledge is needed. This example illustrates the claim advanced by Schneuwly and Bronckart (1986: 287-291) according to which the extralinguistic premises of discourse, the conditions of production, the aim of discourse, and the relations between text producer and receptor have an influence on the type of text to be created, and consequently on the density and the type of textual organizers used. The writer of this text assumes that his hearers/readers have the extralinguistic knowledge needed to make the inferences required. Or, according to Fayol (1986: 103), the adult author - in contrast to a child who does not yet master textual planning - has in mind his potential receptors and has created a mental image of them for himself, which in turn

helps him to evaluate which relations have to be explicitly marked, and which can remain more or less implicit.

On the other hand, especially in the case of written discourse, the indications given by the 'M.I.L.' gain a contractual value, i.e. the receptor is expecting them to signal to him the conventionalized information regularly attached to these markers. If the writer does not master the use of these markers, the quality of the communication suffers. As Turco and Coltier (1988: 73) point out, an error in their manipulation may lead to the loss of the credibility of the text. This is what often happens with Finnish students writing in French as L2. To begin with, they use very few pragmatic markers, if any, i.e. they still seem to lack the ability to organize their discourse in a way which respects the conventions of the target language. In the next phase, they use these markers but in an inappropriate way (Lindgren, personal communication 1990), which is bound to disorientate or to annoy the native reader; hence he finds it difficult to accept the L2 texts as coherent discourse.

> (11) Mais en ce qui concerne le langage parlé dans un contexte littéraire, il n'est cependant jamais question d'une simple imitation de la langue parlée réelle.....Il ne s'agit donc pas d'une reproduction mais d'une transposition de la langue parlée à l'écrit, d'une impression ou d'une illusion de l'oralité.
>
> *De là*, on continue à l'examen détaillé du 'Voyage au bout de la nuit'. L'analyse de l'ouvrage par comparaison aux caractéristiques de la langue parlée en général.....

Example (11) is from the French summary of a master's thesis dealing with problems in translating the language of Celine into Finnish. The writer already masters the manipulation of counterargumentative connectors ('*mais*','*cependant*') and consecutive connectors ('*donc*') (cf.Roulet et al. 1985). The connective '*de là*', however, is used instead of the M.I.L. category to indicate the structure and chronological organization of the thesis. This connective does not work as a temporal textual organizer in French, nor does it reach across the paragraph boundary.

2.2. *The paragraph as a textual organizer*

As Wikberg (1988) and likewise Bessonat (1988) point out, the paragraph has no real, acknowledged status within linguistic research, not even in text linguistics. This is probably due to the fact that the paragraph is considered simply as a typographic means, or, at best, the surface manifestation of more profound linguistic phenomena. A radically different attitude is taken by Hoffmann (1989: 243-244) according to whom the paragraph is a pragmatic signal for the reader to clear his mental blackboard or at least a signal for him to make a pause in order to think about what

has to be conserved (the macropropositions?) and what can be wiped out. Furthermore, the introduction of a new paragraph tells the reader that supplementary or new information is to follow. According to Hoffmann (1989: 241), a proof of this argument is the fact that paragraph breaks function as barriers to anaphora, i.e. that a pronoun or other anaphoric element cannot in general be used at the beginning of a new paragraph, if its nearest antecedent is embedded in the preceding paragraph. However, there are cases where an anaphoric pronoun can be used; either the anaphoric element has but one possible antecedent so that no confusion can arise as to its identity or, if the antecedent is not explicitly expressed, it should be coreferential with the topic of the preceding paragraph.

> (12) *La tentative de Kaplan* possède à la fois une immense portée et un domaine d'application très limité. Sa portée immense, c'est de proposer un modèle d'interprétation sémantique cohérante.....Sa portée limitée s'explique par le fait que les déictiques ne sont pour Kaplan qu'un example linguistique d'une part de référance directe, et d'autre part de phénomène réclamant la distinction du contenu et du caractére.....
>
> *Elle* a préparé la voie aux sémantiques directement référentielles.....

If only grammatical cues were taken into account, there is a possibility of confusion in this example for a reader not familiar with linguistics. However, the writer of this article assumes his audience to have the extralinguistic knowledge required in order to find the only possible referent, the topic of the preceding paragraph,'*la tentative de Kaplan*'.

Hoffmann (1989: 245-246) goes on to state that in cases where anaphoric pronouns bridge across the paragraph boundary, their function is to link the paragraphs thus united into a larger functional unit. This conception of paragraphs forming a larger functional unit is closely related to the idea of the paragraph having a double value proposed by Bessonat (1988). The paragraph can be a marker of the linear organization of a discourse, but it can also form a part of the hierarchic structure of the text. Consequently the text could have a 'key paragraph' and several subordinate paragraphs. One example of this kind of organization is the derived thematic progression of Danes (1974) in cases where the hypertheme is expressed first and the derived or subthemes are each further developed in subsequent paragraphs.

Like Hoffmann, Le Ny considers paragraphs as pragmatic signals to the readers based on cognition. He goes so far as to suggest that the writer thinks in terms of paragraphs, that he develops his argument point by point, paragraph by paragraph until the argument is complete (1985: 127). If this were true, the paragraph would have a double function: 1) to provide new information but 2) also to restrict the possibilities of interpretation through the paragraph's metatextual function, i.e. it is

supposed that the mobilized cognitive processes of the writer and those of his readers are to some extent isomorphic. According to the conception of the dialogic nature of all discourse, Bakhtine (1977: 158) argues that paragraphs are analogous with the turns of a dialogue. "The division of the discourse into parts, called paragraphs in writing, is motivated by the adjustment to the anticipated reactions of the reader". (My translation.)

The notion of paragraph as a cognitive unit is of interest if we study the paragraphing of Finnish and French academic discourse on the local level, i.e. how the transition from one paragraph to another is marked. In both cases the connectedness is achieved partly by anaphoric nominalizations, which are frequently accompanied by a demonstrative or deictic pronoun. As Combettes (1988: 27) points out, the use of the demonstrative in such cases forces the reader to accept the concept as textually or pragmatically evoked. The function of these anaphoric nominalizations is to express in a condensed form the central content of the preceding paragraph(s). Thus they mark explicitly what is to be conserved and what can be wiped off the mental blackboard. In the Finnish texts of my corpus, the distance between the anaphoric nominalization and its referent is, however, shorter than in the French texts; for example, no anaphoric nominalizations reaching across headings are found. A condensing anaphoric nominalization without a demonstrative or a deictic pronoun is also used in the Finnish discourse of my corpus, thus making the marking less evident than is the case in the French discourse.

The anaphoric nominalizations have yet another function in academic discourse. The pre- and post-modifications of nominalizations allow the narrowing down of the scope of the theme discussed in general terms in a preceding paragraph. The paragraph boundary is an explicit signal of a topic shift; the nominalization simultaneously ensures the cohesion and the dynamic progression of the text.

As is often pointed out, connectors are not necessary elements of text construction, even if they are explicit signals of text coherence. According to Rudolph (1988: 100-101), their use implies a certain distance on the part of the speaker from the reported facts and events. Secondly, they guide the readers into keeping a similar distance. Does the paragraph boundary act as another barrier to such pragmatic information in French or Finnish? Connectors in general, but especially argumentative and counter-argumentative connectors (Roulet et al. 1985) - cf. Rudolph's (1988) connection of contrast and causality - are less frequently used to bridge across the paragraph boundary in the Finnish texts of my corpus. The consecutive connectors are an exception in this respect and especially 'siis' (= 'donc', 'consequently'), is used to tie together remarks or conclusions in the preceding paragraph(s). Particularly salient is the scarcity of the counter-argumentative connector 'mutta' (= 'mais', 'but') in

paragraph initial position. According to Roulet et al. (1985: 112), this connector has the most marked counter-argumentative value. However, the Finnish texts of the corpus make frequent use of the counter-argumentative connectors 'mutta' (='mais', 'but' and 'kuitenkin' (='cependant', however) in order to express the logical connections of propositions within a paragraph. On the other hand, counter-arguments are also presented in a weakened, less explicit form through a member of the M.I.L. category 'toisaalta' (= on the other hand). Furthermore, the range of connectors used to connect paragraphs is very limited in the Finnish texts of the corpus. The consecutive connector 'siis' (= 'donc') discussed above is by far the most frequent.

Connectors reaching across the paragraph boundary are especially scarce in the students' summaries produced in L2. This phenomenon can be accounted for by several factors: 1) as even the mastery of intersentential connectors causes problems (cf. Hildén and Suomela-Salmi 1981), it is only natural that these are avoided when larger units are in question. 2) Finnish uses different linguistic means, for example clitics, to express logical relations and connectedness between paragraphs which in French are expressed by explicit logico-syntactic means. (Fernandez-Vest, 1988: 107).

> (13) Tulkittiin*pa* vastakysymys kysymykseksi tai vastakysymykseksi, se osoittaa aina, että B pitää A:n kysymystä jollain tavoin epärelevanttina....

In this example the clitic *-pa* expresses the concessive relation connecting the former paragraph and the new paragraph which continues the discussion on the two alternatives already presented to the reader. In French this relation would have to be expressed by an explicit connector 'quoique'.

> (14) *Fokusointi*siirrot*kaan* eivät ole mielivaltaisia.....Fokusointi perustuu diskurssivaatimuksiin. Diskurssikytkeinen elementti *fokusoidaan*.....
>
> Huomattakoon, että *fokusoimattomatkin* lauseet ovat hyvänmuotoisia,mutta ne ovat kontekstissaan outoja.

Example (14) shows the interplay of clitics *-kaan*, *-kin*, which in this case express additive relations, and the use of repetition in order to connect the paragraphs. In the latter paragraph the repetition in fact expresses an antithetic semantic relation (fokusoimattomat/*kin* = not focused/*either*). The use of an explicit counter-argumentative connector 'vaikka' = bien que' would have been possible; instead, a metatextual marker 'huomattakoon' (= 'il est à noter que', 'it is worth noting') is used to signal the opposition to follow. 3) The summaries of master's degree theses are not yet academic discourses in the proper sense of the word, i.e. the argumentation is but weakly developed, whereas the informative function is dominant.

3. Concluding remarks

Marking of all the categories of textual organization dealt with in this paper is linguistically possible in both French and Finnish. However, if the Finnish and French texts of my corpus were put on a scale measuring the degree of explicit textual structuring, the French texts would belong to the categories of very dense to moderate explicit marking whereas the Finnish texts would belong to the categories of moderate to scarce explicit marking. In particular, the density of the M.I.L. category is different in the two languages; for example, Finnish discourse very seldom marks the textual organization of the same sequence twice. The scarcity of connectors bridging across paragraph boundaries in Finnish academic discourse could of course be explained by the fact that such usage is discouraged in our written tradition, because it is not considered elegant. The question WHY?, however, remains. Is the cognitive status of the paragraph different in Finnish? Or is a narrative text strategy adopted rather than an argumentative strategy, which makes more use of connective expressions to indicate explicitly the speaker's opinion of the relationships of facts or events (cf. Rudolph 1988)? On the other hand, Finnish academic discourse favours more implicit means of indicating textual organization: a stronger reliance on the linearity of discourse; the use of antithetic semantic relations; clitics to express those relations that French discourse has to express by explicit logico-syntactic devices; typographic means, etc. This different marking of textual organization may, however,be very disorientating to the native French reader because of his different expectations, since French argumentative and expository texts are especially densely marked by textual organizers (Schneuwly and Bronckart, 1986: 289, 291).

It would be tempting to explain these subtle differences as being due to differences in academic traditions and varying intellectual styles as Clyne (1987) does for argumentation. However, the influence of linguistic factors, such as the so-called 'free' word order in Finnish, is probably also involved, and this should be taken into consideration, too (Enkvist, 1990, personal communication).

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Appendix

Translations of the Finnish examples :

2) Of special interest in the adaptation theory are its implications. I shall mention only *two* of them: variability and contextual influence.

3) According to Verschuren there are macro- and microadaptations. For example the adjustment of language is from the point of adaptation a macro phenomenon. As an example of adaptation on the micro-level *again* the terminology of addressing can be cited.

Another important point is the bidirectionality of adaptation.

6) Whether combining is purely compositional or can somehow affect the result obtained from the parts, is for the moment one of the problematic questions in the study of CG.

On the other hand CG is the only grammar model which in itself, as a purely theoretical construction, has a connection with semantics. In addition its sentence analysis ....

10) The view of the discontinuity of historical events is put forward by *Michel Foucault* in his book 'Les mots et les choses'(1966)....*Jaques Derrida* again 'radicalizes' Foucault's point of view:....*Jean-François Lyotard* has borrowed his key concept, i.e. "the language game" from Wittgenstein's late philosophy, and he again "radicalizes" Wittgenstein's point of view....

13) Whether the question is considered a question or a counterquestion, it always shows that B considers A's question as somehow irrelevant.

14)The *focus shifts* are not arbitrary *either*....Focusing is based on discourse requirements. The discourse connected element is *focused*....

It is to be noted that *even unfocused* sentences are well formed, but they are odd in the context.